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ON TRANSLATING HOMER

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ON TRANSLATING HOMER

LAST WORDS

A LECTURE GIVEN AT OXFORD

BY

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Multi, qui persequuntur me, et tribulant me: a testimoniis non declinavi.

ON TRANSLATING HOMER:

LAST WORDS.

BUFFON, the great French naturalist, imposed on himself the rule of steadily abstaining from all answer to attacks made upon him. 'Je n'ai jamais répondu à aucune critique,' he said to one of his friends who, on the occasion of a certain criticism, was eager to take up arms in his behalf; 'je n'ai jamais répondu à aucune critique, et je garderai le même silence sur celle-ci.' On another occasion, when accused of plagiarism, and pressed by his friends to answer, 'Il vaut mieux,' he said, 'laisser ces mauvaises gens dans l'incertitude.' Even when reply to an attack was made successfully, he disapproved of it, he regretted that those he esteemed should make it. Montesquieu, more sensitive to criticism than Buffon, had answered, and successfully answered, an attack made upon his great work, the *Esprit des Lois*, by the *Gazetier Janséniste*. This Jansenist Gazetteer was a periodical of those times,—a periodical such as other times, also, have occasionally seen,—very pretentious, very aggressive, and, when the point to be seized was at all a delicate one, very apt to miss it.

'Notwithstanding this example,' said Buffon,—who, as well as Montesquieu, had been attacked by the Jansenist Gazetteer,—'notwithstanding this example, I think I may promise my course will be different. I shall not answer a single word.'

And to any one who has noticed the baneful effects of controversy, with all its train of personal rivalries and hatreds, on men of letters or men of science; to any one who has observed how it tends to impair, not only their dignity and repose, but their productive force, their genuine activity; how it always checks the free play of the spirit, and often ends by stopping it altogether; it can hardly seem doubtful, that the rule thus imposed on himself by Buffon was a wise one. His own career, indeed, admirably shows the wisdom of it. That career was as glorious as it was serene; but it owed to its serenity no small part of its glory. The regularity and completeness with which he gradually built up the great work which he had designed, the air of equable majesty which he shed over it, struck powerfully the imagination of his contemporaries, and surrounded Buffon's fame with a peculiar respect and dignity. 'He is,' said Frederick the Great of him, 'the man who has best deserved the great celebrity which he has acquired.' And this regularity of production, this equableness of temper, he maintained by his resolute disdain of personal controversy.

Buffon's example seems to me worthy of all imita-

tion, and in my humble way I mean always to follow it. I never have replied, I never will reply, to any literary assailant; in such encounters tempers are lost, the world laughs, and truth is not served. Least of all should I think of using this Chair as a place from which to carry on such a conflict. But when a learned and estimable man thinks he has reason to complain of language used by me in this Chair,—when he attributes to me intentions and feelings towards him which are far from my heart, I owe him some explanation,—and I am bound, too, to make the explanation as public as the words which gave offence. This is the reason why I revert once more to the subject of translating Homer. But being thus brought back to that subject, and not wishing to occupy you solely with an explanation which, after all, is Mr. Newman's affair and mine, not the public's, I shall take the opportunity,—not certainly to enter into any conflict with any one,—but to try to establish our old friend, the coming translator of Homer, yet a little firmer in the positions which I hope we have now secured for him; to protect him against the danger of relaxing, in the confusion of dispute, his attention to those matters which alone I consider important for him; to save him from losing sight, in the dust of the attacks delivered over it, of the real body of Patroclus. He will probably, when he arrives, requite my solicitude very ill, and be in haste to disown his benefactor; but my interest in

him is so sincere that I can disregard his probable ingratitude.

First, however, for the explanation. Mr. Newman has published a reply to the remarks which I made on his translation of the Iliad. He seems to think that the respect which at the outset of those remarks I professed for him must have been professed ironically; he says that I use 'forms of attack against him which he does not know how to characterise;' that I 'speak scornfully' of him, treat him with 'gratuitous insult, gratuitous rancour;' that I 'propagate slanders' against him, that I wish to 'damage him with my readers,' to 'stimulate my readers to despise' him. He is entirely mistaken. I respect Mr. Newman sincerely; I respect him as one of the few learned men we have, one of the few who love learning for its own sake; this respect for him I had before I read his translation of the Iliad, I retained it while I was commenting on that translation, I have not lost it after reading his reply. Any vivacities of expression which may have given him pain I sincerely regret, and can only assure him that I used them without a thought of insult or rancour. When I took the liberty of creating the verb *to Newmanise*, my intentions were no more rancorous than if I had said *to Miltonise;* when I exclaimed, in my astonishment at his vocabulary,—'With whom can Mr. Newman have lived?'—I meant merely to convey, in a familiar form of speech, the sense of bewilderment

one has at finding a person to whom words one thought all the world knew seem strange, and words one thought entirely strange, intelligible. Yet this simple expression of my bewilderment Mr. Newman construes into an accusation that he is 'often guilty of keeping low company,' and says that I shall 'never want a stone to throw at him.' And what is stranger still, one of his friends gravely tells me that Mr. Newman 'lived with the fellows of Balliol.' As if that made Mr. Newman's glossary less inexplicable to me! As if he could have got his glossary from the fellows of Balliol! As if I could believe, that the members of that distinguished society,—of whose discourse, not so many years afterwards, I myself was an unworthy hearer,—were in Mr. Newman's time so far removed from the Attic purity of speech which we all of us admired, that when one of them called a calf a *bulkin*, the rest 'easily understood' him; or, when he wanted to say that a newspaper-article was 'proudly fine,' it mattered little whether he said it was that or *bragly!* No; his having lived with the fellows of Balliol does not explain Mr. Newman's glossary to me. I will no longer ask 'with whom he can have lived,' since that gives him offence; but I must still declare that where he got his test of rarity or intelligibility for words is a mystery to me.

That, however, does not prevent me from entertaining a very sincere respect for Mr. Newman

and since he doubts it, I am glad to reiterate my expression of it. But the truth of the matter is this: I unfeignedly admire Mr. Newman's ability and learning; but I think in his translation of Homer he has employed that ability and learning quite amiss. I think he has chosen quite the wrong field for turning his ability and learning to account. I think that in England, partly from the want of an Academy, partly from a national habit of intellect to which that want of an Academy is itself due, there exists too little of what I may call a public force of correct literary opinion, possessing within certain limits a clear sense of what is right and wrong, sound and unsound, and sharply recalling men of ability and learning from any flagrant misdirection of these their advantages. I think, even, that in our country a powerful misdirection of this kind is often more likely to subjugate and pervert opinion, than to be checked and corrected by it.* Hence a chaos of false tendencies, wasted efforts, impotent conclusions, works which ought never to have been undertaken. Any one who can introduce a little

* 'It is the fact, that scholars of fastidious refinement, but of a judgment which I think far more masculine than Mr. Arnold's, have passed a most encouraging sentence on large specimens of my translation. I at present count eight such names.'—'Before venturing to print, I sought to ascertain how unlearned women and children would accept my verses. I could boast how children and half-educated women have extolled them, how greedily a working man has inquired for them, without knowing who was the translator.'—Mr. NEWMAN's *Reply*, pp. 2, 12, 13.

order into this chaos by establishing in any quarter a single sound rule of criticism, a single rule which clearly marks what is right as right, and what is wrong as wrong, does a good deed; and his deed is so much the better the greater force he counteracts of learning and ability applied to thicken the chaos. Of course no one can be sure that he has fixed any such rules; he can only do his best to fix them; but somewhere or other, in the literary opinion of Europe, if not in the literary opinion of one nation, in fifty years, if not in five, there is a final judgment on these matters, and the critic's work will at last stand or fall by its true merits.

Meanwhile, the charge of having in one instance misapplied his powers, of having once followed a false tendency, is no such grievous charge to bring against a man; it does not exclude a great respect for himself personally, or for his powers in the happier manifestation of them. False tendency is, I have said, an evil to which the artist or the man of letters in England is peculiarly prone; but everywhere in our time he is liable to it,—the greatest as well as the humblest. 'The first beginnings of my Wilhelm Meister,' says Goethe, 'arose out of an obscure sense of the great truth that man will often attempt something for which nature has denied him the proper powers, will undertake and practise something in which he cannot become skilled. An inward feeling warns him to desist' (yes, but there

are, unhappily, cases of absolute judicial blindness!), 'nevertheless he cannot get clear in himself about it, and is driven along a false road to a false goal, without knowing how it is with him. To this we may refer everything which goes by the name of false tendency, dilettantism, and so on. A great many men waste in this way the fairest portion of their lives, and fall at last into wonderful delusion.' Yet after all,—Goethe adds,—it sometimes happens that even on this false road a man finds, not indeed that which he sought, but something which is good and useful for him; 'like Saul, the son of Kish, who went forth to look for his father's asses, and found a kingdom.' And thus false tendency as well as true, vain effort as well as fruitful, go together to produce that great movement of life, to present that immense and magic spectacle of human affairs, which from boyhood to old age fascinates the gaze of every man of imagination, and which would be his terror, if it were not at the same time his delight.

So Mr. Newman may see how wide-spread a danger it is, to which he has, as I think, in setting himself to translate Homer, fallen a prey. He may be well satisfied if he can escape from it by paying it the tribute of a single work only. He may judge how unlikely it is that I should 'despise' him for once falling a prey to it. I know far too well how exposed to it we all are; how exposed to it I myself am. At this very moment, for example, I

am fresh from reading Mr. Newman's reply to my lectures; a reply full of that erudition in which (as I am so often and so good-naturedly reminded, but indeed I know it without being reminded), Mr. Newman is immeasurably my superior. Well, the demon that pushes us all to our ruin is even now prompting me to follow Mr. Newman into a discussion about the digamma, and I know not what providence holds me back. And some day, I have no doubt, I shall lecture on the language of the Berbers, and give him his entire revenge.

But Mr. Newman does not confine himself to complaints on his own behalf, he complains on Homer's behalf too. He says that my 'statements about Greek literature are against the most notorious and elementary fact'; that I 'do a public wrong to literature by publishing them;' and that the Professors to whom I appealed in my three Lectures, 'would only lose credit if they sanctioned the use I make of their names.' He does these eminent men the kindness of adding, however, that 'whether they are pleased with this parading of their names in behalf of paradoxical error, he may well doubt,' and that 'until they endorse it themselves, he shall treat my process as a piece of forgery.' He proceeds to discuss my statements at great length, and with an erudition and ingenuity which nobody can admire more than I do. And he ends by saying that my ignorance is great.

Alas! that is very true. Much as Mr. Newman was mistaken when he talked of my rancour, he is entirely right when he talks of my ignorance. And yet, perverse as it seems to say so, I sometimes find myself wishing, when dealing with these matters of poetical criticism, that my ignorance were even greater than it is. To handle these matters properly there is needed a poise so perfect, that the least overweight in any direction tends to destroy the balance. Temper destroys it, a crotchet destroys it, even erudition may destroy it. To press to the sense of the thing itself with which one is dealing, not to go off on some collateral issue about the thing, is the hardest matter in the world. The 'thing itself' with which one is here dealing,—the critical perception of poetic truth,—is of all things the most volatile, elusive, and evanescent; by even pressing too impetuously after it, one runs the risk of losing it. The critic of poetry should have the finest tact, the nicest moderation, the most free, flexible, and elastic spirit imaginable; he should be indeed the 'ondoyant et divers,' the *undulating and diverse* being of Montaigne. The less he can deal with his object simply and freely, the more things he has to take into account in dealing with it,—the more, in short, he has to encumber himself,—so much the greater force of spirit he needs to retain his elasticity. But one cannot exactly have this greater force by wishing for it; so, for the force of spirit one has, the

load put upon it is often heavier than it will well bear. The late Duke of Wellington said of a certain peer that 'it was a great pity his education had been so far too much for his abilities.' In like manner, one often sees erudition out of all proportion to its owner's critical faculty. Little as I know, therefore, I am always apprehensive, in dealing with poetry, lest even that little should prove 'too much for my abilities.'

With this consciousness of my own lack of learning,—nay, with this sort of acquiescence in it, with this belief that for the labourer in the field of poetical criticism learning has its disadvantages,—I am not likely to dispute with Mr. Newman about matters of erudition. All that he says on these matters in his Reply I read with great interest: in general I agree with him; but only, I am sorry to say, up to a certain point. Like all learned men, accustomed to desire definite rules, he draws his conclusions too absolutely; he wants to include too much under his rules; he does not quite perceive that in poetical criticism the shade, the fine distinction, is everything; and that, when he has once missed this, in all he says he is in truth but beating the air. For instance: because I think Homer noble, he imagines I must think him elegant; and in fact he says in plain words that I do think him so, — that to me Homer seems 'pervadingly elegant.' But he does not. Virgil is ele-

gant,—'pervadingly elegant,'—even in passages of the highest emotion:

> O, ubi campi,
> Spercheosque, et virginibus bacchata Lacænis
> Taygeta!*

Even there Virgil, though of a divine elegance, is still elegant: but Homer is not elegant; the word is quite a wrong one to apply to him, and Mr. Newman is quite right in blaming any one he finds so applying it. Again; arguing against my assertion that Homer is not quaint, he says: 'It is quaint to call waves *wet*, milk *white*, blood *dusky*, horses *single-hoofed*, words *winged*, Vulcan *Lobfoot* (Κυλλοποδίων), a spear *longshadowy*,' and so on. I find I know not how many distinctions to draw here. I do not think it quaint to call waves *wet*, or milk *white*, or words *winged;* but I do think it quaint to call horses *single-hoofed*, or Vulcan *Lobfoot*, or a spear *longshadowy*. As to calling blood *dusky*, I do not feel quite sure; I will tell Mr. Newman my opinion when I see the passage in which he calls it so. But then, again, because it is quaint to call Vulcan *Lobfoot*, I cannot admit that it was quaint to call him Κυλλοποδίων; nor that, because it is quaint to call a spear *longshadowy*, it was quaint to call it δολιχόσκιον. Here Mr. Newman's erudition misleads him: he

* 'Oh for the fields of Thessaly and the streams of Spercheios! Oh for the hills alive with the dances of the Laconian maidens, the hills of Taygetus!'—*Georgics*, ii. 486.

knows the literal value of the Greek so well, that he thinks his literal rendering identical with the Greek, and that the Greek must stand or fall along with his rendering. But the real question is, not whether he has given us, so to speak, full change for the Greek, but *how* he gives us our change: we want it in gold, and he gives it us in copper. Again: 'It is quaint,' says Mr. Newman, 'to address a young friend as "O Pippin!"—it is quaint to compare Ajax to an ass whom boys are belabouring.' Here, too, Mr. Newman goes much too fast, and his category of quaintness is too comprehensive. To address a young friend as 'O Pippin!' is, I cordially agree with him, very quaint; although I do not think it was quaint in Sarpedon to address Glaucus as ὦ πέπον: but in comparing, whether in Greek or in English, Ajax to an ass whom boys are belabouring, I do not see that there is of necessity anything quaint at all. Again; because I said that *eld*, *lief*, *in sooth*, and other words, are, as Mr. Newman uses them in certain places, bad words, he imagines that I must mean to stamp these words with an absolute reprobation; and because I said that 'my Bibliolatry is excessive,' he imagines that I brand all words as ignoble which are not in the Bible. Nothing of the kind: there are no such absolute rules to be laid down in these matters. The Bible vocabulary is to be used as an assistance, not as an authority. Of the words which, placed where Mr. Newman places

them, I have called bad words, every one may be excellent in some other place. Take *eld*, for instance: when Shakspeare, reproaching man with the dependence in which his youth is passed, says:

> all thy blessed youth
> Becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms
> Of palsied *eld* . . .

it seems to me that *eld* comes in excellently there, in a passage of curious meditation; but when Mr. Newman renders ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε by 'from *Eld* and Death exempted,' it seems to me he infuses a tinge of quaintness into the transparent simplicity of Homer's expression, and so I call *eld* a bad word in that place.

Once more. Mr. Newman lays it down as a general rule that 'many of Homer's energetic descriptions are expressed in coarse physical words.' He goes on: 'I give one illustration—Τρῶες προὔτυψαν ἀολλέες. Cowper, misled by the *ignis fatuus* of "stateliness," renders it absurdly:

> The powers of Ilium gave the first assault
> Embattled close;

but it is, strictly, "The Trojans *knocked forward* (or, thumped, butted forward) *in close pack*." The verb is too coarse for later polished prose, and even the adjective is very strong (*packed together*). I believe, that "forward in pack the Trojans pitch'd," would not be really unfaithful to the Homeric

colour; and I maintain, that "forward in mass the Trojans pitch'd," would be an irreprovable rendering.' He actually gives us all that as if it were a piece of scientific deduction; and as if, at the end, he had arrived at an incontrovertible conclusion. But, in truth, one cannot settle these matters quite in this way. Mr. Newman's general rule may be true or false (I dislike to meddle with general rules), but every part in what follows must stand or fall by itself, and its soundness or unsoundness has nothing at all to do with the truth or falsehood of Mr. Newman's general rule. He first gives, as a strict rendering of the Greek, 'The Trojans knocked forward (or, thumped, butted forward), in close pack.' I need not say that, as a 'strict rendering of the Greek,' this is good,—all Mr. Newman's 'strict renderings of the Greek' are sure to be, as such, good; but 'in close pack,' for ἀολλέες, seems to me to be what Mr. Newman's renderings are not always,—an excellent *poetical rendering* of the Greek; a thousand times better, certainly, than Cowper's 'embattled close.' Well, but Mr. Newman goes on: 'I believe, that "forward in pack the Trojans pitch'd," would not be really unfaithful to the Homeric colour.' Here, I say, the Homeric colour is half washed out of Mr. Newman's happy rendering of ἀολλέες; while in 'pitch'd' for προΰτυψαν, the literal fidelity of the first rendering is gone, while certainly no Homeric colour has come in its

place. Finally, Mr. Newman concludes: 'I maintain that "forward in mass the Trojans pitch'd," would be an irreprovable rendering.' Here, in what Mr. Newman fancies his final moment of triumph, Homeric colour and literal fidelity have alike abandoned him altogether; the last stage of his translation is much worse than the second, and immeasurably worse than the first.

All this to show that a looser, easier method than Mr. Newman's must be taken, if we are to arrive at any good result in these questions. I now go on to follow Mr. Newman a little further, not at all as wishing to dispute with him, but as seeking (and this is the true fruit we may gather from criticisms upon us) to gain hints from him for the establishment of some useful truth about our subject, even when I think him wrong. I still retain, I confess, my conviction that Homer's characteristic qualities are rapidity of movement, plainness of words and style, simplicity and directness of ideas, and, above all, nobleness, the grand manner. Whenever Mr. Newman drops a word, awakens a train of thought, which leads me to see any of these characteristics more clearly, I am grateful to him; and one or two suggestions of this kind which he affords, are all that now,—having expressed my sorrow that he should have misconceived my feelings towards him, and pointed out what I think the vice of his method of criticism,—I have to notice in his Reply.

Such a suggestion I find in Mr. Newman's remarks on my assertion that the translator of Homer must not adopt a quaint and antiquated style in rendering him, because the impression which Homer makes upon the living scholar is not that of a poet quaint and antiquated, but that of a poet perfectly simple, perfectly intelligible. I added that we cannot, I confess, really know how Homer seemed to Sophocles, but that it is impossible to me to believe that he seemed to him quaint and antiquated. Mr. Newman asserts, on the other hand, that I am absurdly wrong here; that Homer seemed 'out and out' quaint and antiquated to the Athenians; that 'every sentence of him was more or less antiquated to Sophocles, who could no more help feeling at every instant the foreign and antiquated character of the poetry, than an Englishman can help feeling the same in reading Burns's poems.' And not only does Mr. Newman say this, but he has managed thoroughly to convince some of his readers of it. 'Homer's Greek,' says one of them, 'certainly seemed antiquated to the historical times of Greece. Mr. Newman, taking a far broader historical and philological view than Mr. Arnold, stoutly maintains that it did seem so.' And another says: 'Doubtless Homer's dialect and diction were as hard and obscure to a later Attic Greek, as Chaucer to an Englishman of our day.'

Mr. Newman goes on to say, that not only was

Homer antiquated relatively to Pericles, but he is antiquated to the living scholar; and, indeed, is in himself 'absolutely antique, being the poet of a barbarian age.' He tells us of his 'inexhaustible quaintnesses,' of his 'very eccentric diction;' and he infers, of course, that he is perfectly right in rendering him in a quaint and antiquated style.

Now this question,—whether or no Homer seemed quaint and antiquated to Sophocles,—I call a delightful question to raise. It is not a barren verbal dispute; it is a question 'drenched in matter,' to use an expression of Bacon; a question full of flesh and blood, and of which the scrutiny, though I still think we cannot settle it absolutely, may yet give us a directly useful result. To scrutinise it may lead us to see more clearly what sort of a style a modern translator of Homer ought to adopt.

Homer's verses were some of the first words which a young Athenian heard. He heard them from his mother or his nurse before he went to school; and at school, when he went there, he was constantly occupied with them. So much did he hear of them that Socrates proposes, in the interests of morality, to have selections from Homer made, and placed in the hands of mothers and nurses, in his model republic; in order that, of an author with whom they were sure to be so perpetually conversant, the young might learn only those parts which might do them good. His language was as familiar to Sophocles,

we may be quite sure, as the language of the Bible is to us.

Nay, more. Homer's language was not, of course, in the time of Sophocles, the spoken or written language of ordinary life, any more than the language of the Bible, any more than the language of poetry, is with us; but for one great species of composition,—epic poetry,—it was still the current language; it was the language in which every one who made that sort of poetry composed. Every one at Athens who dabbled in epic poetry, not only understood Homer's language,—he possessed it. He possessed it as every one who dabbles in poetry with us, possesses what may be called the poetical vocabulary, as distinguished from the vocabulary of common speech and of modern prose: I mean, such expressions as *perchance* for *perhaps*, *spake* for *spoke*, *aye* for *ever*, *don* for *put on*, *charméd* for *charm'd*, and thousands of others.

I might go to Burns and Chaucer, and taking words and passages from them, ask if they afforded any parallel to a language so familiar and so possessed. But this I will not do, for Mr. Newman himself supplies me with what he thinks a fair parallel, in its effect upon us, to the language of Homer in its effect upon Sophocles. He says that such words as *mon*, *londis*, *libbard*, *withouten*, *muchel*, give us a tolerable but incomplete notion of this parallel; and he finally exhibits the parallel

in all its clearness, by this poetical specimen:

> Dat mon, quhich hauldeth Kyngis-af
> Londis yn féo, niver
> (I tell 'e) feereth aught; sith hee
> Doth hauld hys londis yver.

Now, does Mr. Newman really think that Sophocles could, as he says, 'no more help feeling at every instant the foreign and antiquated character of Homer, than an Englishman can help feeling the same in hearing' these lines? Is he quite sure of it? He says he is; he will not allow of any doubt or hesitation in the matter. I had confessed we could not really know how Homer seemed to Sophocles;—'Let Mr. Arnold confess for himself,' cries Mr. Newman, 'and not for me, who know perfectly well.' And this is what he knows!

Mr. Newman says, however, that I 'play fallaciously on the words familiar and unfamiliar;' that 'Homer's words may have been familiar to the Athenians (*i. e.* often heard) even when they were either not understood by them, or else, being understood, were yet felt and known to be utterly foreign. Let my renderings,' he continues, 'be heard, as Pope or even Cowper has been heard, and no one will be "surprised."'

But the whole question is here. The translator must not assume that to have taken place which has not taken place, although, perhaps, he may wish it to have taken place,—namely, that his diction is

become an established possession of the minds of men, and therefore is, in its proper place, familiar to them, will not 'surprise' them. If Homer's language was familiar,—that is, often heard,—then to this language words like *londis* and *libbard*, which are not familiar, offer, for the translator's purpose, no parallel. For some purpose of the philologer they may offer a parallel to it; for the translator's purpose they offer none. The question is not, whether a diction is antiquated for current speech, but whether it is antiquated for that particular purpose for which it is employed. A diction that is antiquated for common speech and common prose, may very well not be antiquated for poetry or certain special kinds of prose. 'Peradventure there shall be ten found there,' is not antiquated for Biblical prose, though for conversation or for a newspaper it is antiquated. 'The trumpet spake not to the arméd throng,' is not antiquated for poetry, although we should not write in a letter, 'he *spake* to me,' or say, 'the British soldier is *arméd* with the Enfield rifle.' But when language is antiquated for that particular purpose for which it is employed, —as numbers of Chaucer's words, for instance, are antiquated for poetry,—such language is a bad representative of language which, like Homer's, was never antiquated for that particular purpose for which it was employed. I imagine that Πηλῃϊάδεω for Πηλείδου, in Homer, no more sounded antiquated

to Sophocles than *arméd* for *arm'd*, in Milton, sounds antiquated to us; but Mr. Newman's *withouten* and *muchel* do sound to us antiquated, even for poetry, and therefore they do not correspond in their effect upon us with Homer's words in their effect upon Sophocles. When Chaucer, who uses such words, is to pass current amongst us, to be familiar to us, as Homer was familiar to the Athenians, he has to be modernised, as Wordsworth and others set to work to modernise him; but an Athenian no more needed to have Homer modernised, than we need to have the Bible modernised, or Wordsworth himself.

Therefore, when Mr. Newman's words *bragly*, *bulkin*, and the rest, are an established possession of our minds, as Homer's words were an established possession of an Athenian's mind, he may use them; but not till then. Chaucer's words, the words of Burns, great poets as these were, are yet not thus an established possession of an Englishman's mind, and therefore they must not be used in rendering Homer into English.

Mr. Newman has been misled just by doing that which his admirer praises him for doing, by taking a 'far broader historical and philological view than' mine. Precisely because he has done this, and has applied the 'philological view' where it was not applicable, but where the 'poetical view' alone was rightly applicable, he has fallen into error.

It is the same with him in his remarks on the

difficulty and obscurity of Homer. Homer, I say, is perfectly plain in speech, simple, and intelligible. And I infer from this that his translator, too, ought to be perfectly plain in speech, simple, and intelligible; ought not to say, for instance, in rendering

Οὔτε κε σὲ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν . . .

'Nor liefly thee would I advance to man-ennobling battle,'—and things of that kind. Mr. Newman hands me a list of some twenty hard words, invokes Buttman, Mr. Malden, and M. Benfey, and asks me if I think myself wiser than all the world of Greek scholars, and if I am ready to supply the deficiencies of Liddell and Scott's Lexicon! But here, again, Mr. Newman errs by not perceiving that the question is one not of scholarship, but of a poetical translation of Homer. This, I say, should be perfectly simple and intelligible. He replies by telling me that ἀδινὸς, εἰλίποδες, and σιγαλόεις are hard words. Well, but what does he infer from that? That the poetical translator, in his rendering of them, is to give us a sense of the difficulties of the scholar, and so is to make his translation obscure? If he does not mean that, how, by bringing forward these hard words, does he touch the question whether an English version of Homer should be plain or not plain? If Homer's poetry, as poetry, is in its general effect on the poetical reader perfectly simple and intelligible, the uncertainty of the scholar about the true meaning of certain words can never change this general

effect. Rather will the poetry of Homer make us forget his philology, than his philology make us forget his poetry. It may even be affirmed that every one who reads Homer perpetually for the sake of enjoying his poetry (and no one who does not so read him will ever translate him well), comes at last to form a perfectly clear sense in his own mind for every important word in Homer, such as ἀδινὸς, or ἠλίβατος, whatever the scholar's doubts about the word may be. And this sense is present to his mind with perfect clearness and fulness, whenever the word recurs, although as a scholar he may know that he cannot be sure whether this sense is the right one or not. But poetically he feels clearly about the word, although philologically he may not. The scholar in him may hesitate, like the father in Sheridan's play; but the reader of poetry in him is, like the governor, fixed. The same thing happens to us with our own language. How many words occur in the Bible, for instance, to which thousands of hearers do not feel sure they attach the precise real meaning; but they make out *a* meaning for them out of what materials they have at hand; and the words, heard over and over again, come to convey this meaning with a certainty which poetically is adequate, though not philologically. How many have attached a clear and poetically adequate sense to 'the *beam*' and 'the *mote*,' though not precisely the right one! How clearly, again, have readers got a

sense from Milton's words, 'grate on their *scrannel* pipes,' who yet might have been puzzled to write a commentary on the word *scrannel* for the dictionary! So we get a clear sense from ἀδινὸς as an epithet for grief, after often meeting with it and finding out all we can about it, even though that all be philologically insufficient: so we get a clear sense from εἰλίποδες as an epithet for cows. And this, his clear poetical sense about the words, not his philological uncertainties about them, is what the translator has to convey. Words like *bragly* and *bulkin* offer no parallel to these words; because the reader, from his entire want of familiarity with the words *bragly* and *bulkin*, has no clear sense of them poetically.

Perplexed by his knowledge of the philological aspect of Homer's language, encumbered by his own learning, Mr. Newman, I say, misses the poetical aspect, misses that with which alone we are here concerned. 'Homer *is* odd,' he persists, fixing his eyes on his own philological analysis of μώνυξ, and μέροψς, and Κυλλοποδίων, and not on these words in their synthetic character;—just as Professor Max Müller, going a little farther back, and fixing his attention on the elementary value of the word θυγάτηρ, might say Homer was 'odd' for using *that* word;—'if the whole Greek nation, by long familiarity, had become inobservant of Homer's oddities,'— of the oddities of this 'noble barbarian,' as Mr. Newman elsewhere calls him, this 'noble barbarian' with the

'lively eye of the savage,' — 'that would be no fault of mine. That would not justify Mr. Arnold's blame of me for rendering the words correctly.' *Correctly* — ah, but what *is* correctness in this case? This correctness of his is the very rock on which Mr. Newman has split. He is so correct that at last he finds peculiarity everywhere. The true knowledge of Homer becomes at last, in his eyes, a knowledge of Homer's 'peculiarities, pleasant and unpleasant.' Learned men know these 'peculiarities,' and Homer is to be translated because the unlearned are impatient to know them too. 'That,' he exclaims, 'is just why people want to read an English Homer,— *to know all his oddities, just as learned men do.*' Here I am obliged to shake my head, and to declare that, in spite of all my respect for Mr. Newman, I cannot go these lengths with him. He talks of my 'monomaniac fancy that there is nothing quaint or antique in Homer.' Terrible learning,— I cannot help in my turn exclaiming, — terrible learning, which discovers so much!

Here, then, I take my leave of Mr. Newman, retaining my opinion that his version of Homer is spoiled by his making Homer odd and ignoble; but having, I hope, sufficient love for literature to be able to canvass works without thinking of persons, and to hold this or that production cheap, while retaining a sincere respect, on other grounds, for its author.

In fulfilment of my promise to take this oppor-

tunity for giving the translator of Homer a little further advice, I proceed to notice one or two other criticisms which I find, in like manner, *suggestive;* which give us an opportunity, that is, of seeing more clearly, as we look into them, the true principles on which translation of Homer should rest. This is all I seek in criticisms; and perhaps (as I have already said) it is only as one seeks a positive result of this kind, that one can get any fruit from them. Seeking a negative result from them, — personal altercation and wrangling,—one gets no fruit; seeking a positive result,—the elucidation and establishment of one's ideas,—one may get much. Even bad criticisms may thus be made suggestive and fruitful. I declared, in a former lecture on this subject, my conviction that criticism is not the strong point of our national literature. Well, even the bad criticisms on our present topic which I meet with, serve to illustrate this conviction for me. And thus one is enabled, even in reading remarks which for Homeric criticism, for their immediate subject, have no value,—which are far too personal in spirit, far too immoderate in temper, and far too heavy-handed in style, for the delicate matter they have to treat,—still to gain light and confirmation for a serious idea, and to follow the Baconian injunction, *semper aliquid addiscere,* always to be adding to one's stock of observation and knowledge. Yes, even when we have to do with writers who,—to quote the words of an exquisite

critic, the master of us all in criticism, M. Sainte Beuve,—remind us, when they handle such subjects as our present, of 'Romans of the fourth or fifth century, coming to hold forth, all at random, in African style, on papers found in the desk of Augustus, Mæcenas, or Pollio,'—even then we may instruct ourselves if we regard ideas and not persons; even then we may enable ourselves to say, with the same critic describing the effect made upon him by D'Argenson's Memoirs: 'My taste is revolted, but I learn something;—*Je suis choqué, mais je suis instruit.*'

But let us pass to criticisms which are suggestive directly and not thus indirectly only; criticisms by examining which we may be brought nearer to what immediately interests us,—the right way of translating Homer.

I said that Homer did not rise and sink with his subject, was never to be called prosaic and low. This gives surprise to many persons, who object that parts of the Iliad are certainly pitched lower than others, and who remind me of a number of absolutely level passages in Homer. But I never denied that a *subject* must rise and sink, that it must have its elevated and its level regions; all I deny is, that a poet can be said to rise and sink when all that he, as a poet, can do, is perfectly well done; when he is perfectly sound and good, that is, perfect as a poet, in the level regions of his subject as well as in its elevated regions. Indeed, what distinguishes the

greatest masters of poetry from all others is, that they are perfectly sound and poetical in these level regions of their subject; in these regions which are the great difficulty of all poets but the very greatest, which they never quite know what to do with. A poet may sink in these regions by being falsely grand as well as by being low; he sinks, in short, whenever he does not treat his matter, whatever it is, in a perfectly good and poetic way. But, so long as he treats it in this way, he cannot be said to *sink*, whatever his matter may do. A passage of the simplest narrative is quoted to me from Homer:*

> ὥτρυνεν δὲ ἕκαστον ἐποιχόμενος ἐπέεσσιν,
> Μέσθλην τε, Γλαῦκόν τε, Μέδοντά τε, Θερσίλοχόν τε . . .

and I am asked, whether Homer does not sink *there*; whether he '*can* have intended such lines as those for poetry?' My answer is: Those lines are very good poetry indeed, poetry of the best class, *in that place*. But when Wordsworth, having to narrate a very plain matter, tries *not* to sink in narrating it, tries, in short, to be what is falsely called poetical, he does sink, although he sinks by being pompous, not by being low.

> Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught,
> While crossing Magdalen Bridge, a glimpse of Cam,
> And at the Hoop alighted, famous inn.

That last line shows excellently how a poet may sink with his subject by resolving not to sink with it. A

* *Iliad*, xvii. 216.

page or two further on, the subject rises to grandeur, and then Wordsworth is nobly worthy of it:

> The antechapel, where the statue stood
> Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.

But the supreme poet is he who is thoroughly sound and poetical, alike when his subject is grand, and when it is plain: with him the subject may sink, but never the poet.

But a Dutch painter does not rise and sink with his subject,—Defoe, in Moll Flanders, does not rise and sink with his subject,—in so far as an artist cannot be said to sink who is sound in his treatment of his subject, however plain it is: yet Defoe, yet a Dutch painter, may in one sense be said to sink with their subject, because, though sound in their treatment of it, they are not *poetical*,—poetical in the true, not the false sense of the word; because, in fact, they are not in the grand style. Homer can in no sense be said to sink with his subject, because his soundness has something more than literal naturalness about it; because his soundness is the soundness of Homer, of a great epic poet; because, in fact, he is in the grand style. So he sheds over the simplest matter he touches the charm of his grand manner; he makes everything noble. Nothing has raised more questioning among my critics than these words, —*noble, the grand style.* People complain that I

do not define these words sufficiently, that I do not tell them enough about them. 'The grand style,—but what *is* the grand style?'—they cry; some with an inclination to believe in it, but puzzled; others mockingly and with incredulity. Alas! the grand style is the last matter in the world for verbal definition to deal with adequately. One may say of it as is said of faith: 'One must feel it in order to know what it is.' But, as of faith, so too one may say of nobleness, of the grand style: 'Woe to those who know it not!' Yet this expression, though indefinable, has a charm; one is the better for considering it; *bonum est, nos hic esse;* nay, one loves to try to explain it, though one knows that one must speak imperfectly. For those, then, who ask the question,—What is the grand style?—with sincerity, I will try to make some answer, inadequate as it must be. For those who ask it mockingly I have no answer, except to repeat to them, with compassionate sorrow, the Gospel words: *Moriemini in peccatis vestris,*—Ye shall die in your sins.

But let me, at any rate, have the pleasure of again giving, before I begin to try and define the grand style, a specimen of what it *is:*

> Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole,
> More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged
> To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days,
> On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues . . .

There is the grand style in perfection; and any one

who has a sense for it, will feel it a thousand times better from repeating those lines than from hearing anything I can say about it.

Let us try, however, what *can* be said, controlling what we say by examples. I think it will be found that the grand style arises in poetry, *when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject.* I think this definition will be found to cover all instances of the grand style in poetry which present themselves. I think it will be found to exclude all poetry which is not in the grand style. And I think it contains no terms which are obscure, which themselves need defining. Even those who do not understand what is meant by calling poetry noble, will understand, I imagine, what is meant by speaking of a noble nature in a man. But the noble or powerful nature,—the *bedeutendes individuum* of Goethe,—is not enough. For instance, Mr. Newman has zeal for learning, zeal for thinking, zeal for liberty, and all these things are noble, they ennoble a man; but he has not the poetical gift: there must be the poetical gift, the 'divine faculty,' also. And, besides all this, the subject must be a serious one (for it is only by a kind of license that we can speak of the grand style in comedy); and it must be treated *with simplicity or severity.* Here is the great difficulty: the poets of the world have been many; there has been wanting neither abundance of poetical gift nor abundance

of noble natures; but a poetical gift so happy, in a noble nature so circumstanced and trained, that the result is a continuous style, perfect in simplicity or perfect in severity, has been extremely rare. One poet has had the gifts of nature and faculty in unequalled fulness, without the circumstances and training which make this sustained perfection of style possible. Of other poets, some have caught this perfect strain now and then, in short pieces or single lines, but have not been able to maintain it through considerable works; others have composed all their productions in a style which, by comparison with the best, one must call secondary.

The best model of the grand style simple is Homer; perhaps the best model of the grand style severe is Milton. But Dante is remarkable for affording admirable examples of both styles; he has the grand style which arises from simplicity, and he has the grand style which arises from severity; and from him I will illustrate them both. In a former lecture I pointed out what that severity of poetical style is, which comes from saying a thing with a kind of intense compression, or in an allusive, brief, almost haughty way, as if the poet's mind were charged with so many and such grave matters, that he would not deign to treat any one of them explicitly. Of this severity the last line of the following stanza of the Purgatory is a good example. Dante has been telling Forese that Virgil had guided

him through Hell, and he goes on:*

Indi m' han tratto su gli suoi conforti,
Salendo e rigirando la Montagna
Che drizza voi che il mondo fece torti.

'Thence hath his comforting aid led me up, climbing and circling the Mountain *which straightens you whom the world made crooked.*' These last words, 'la Montagna *che drizza voi che il mondo fece torti*,' —'the Mountain *which straightens you whom the world made crooked*,'—for the Mountain of Purgatory, I call an excellent specimen of the grand style in severity, where the poet's mind is too full charged to suffer him to speak more explicitly. But the very next stanza is a beautiful specimen of the grand style in simplicity, where a noble nature and a poetical gift unite to utter a thing with the most limpid plainness and clearness:†

Tanto dice di farmi sua compagna
Ch' io sarò là dove fia Beatrice;
Quivi convien che senza lui rimagna.

'So long,' Dante continues, 'so long he (Virgil) saith he will bear me company, until I shall be there where Beatrice is; there it behoves that without him I remain.' But the noble simplicity of that in the Italian no words of mine can render.

Both these styles, the simple and the severe, are truly grand; the severe seems, perhaps, the grandest, so long as we attend most to the great personality,

* *Purgatory*, xxiii. 124. † *Ibid.*, xxiii. 127.

to the noble nature, in the poet its author; the simple seems the grandest when we attend most to the exquisite faculty, to the poetical gift. But the simple is no doubt to be preferred. It is the more *magical:* in the other there is something intellectual, something which gives scope for a play of thought which may exist where the poetical gift is either wanting or present in only inferior degree: the severe is much more imitable, and this a little spoils its charm. A kind of semblance of this style keeps Young going, one may say, through all the nine parts of that most indifferent production, the Night Thoughts. But the grand style in simplicity is inimitable:

αἰὼν ἀσφαλὴς
οὐκ ἔγεντ' οὔτ' Αἰακίδᾳ παρὰ Πηλεῖ,
οὔτε παρ' ἀντιθέῳ Κάδμῳ· λέγονται μὰν βροτῶν
ὄλβον ὑπέρτατον οἱ σχεῖν, οἵ τε καὶ χρυσαμπύκων
μελπομενᾶν ἐν ὄρει Μοισᾶν, καὶ ἐν ἑπταπύλοις
ἄϊον Θήβαις. . . .*

There is a limpidness in that, a want of salient points to seize and transfer, which makes imitation impossible, except by a genius akin to the genius which produced it.

Greek simplicity and Greek grace are inimitable; but it is said that the Iliad may still be ballad-poetry

* 'A secure time fell to the lot neither of Peleus the son of Æacus, nor of the god-like Cadmus; howbeit these are said to have had, of all mortals, the supreme of happiness, who heard the golden-snooded Muses sing, one of them on the mountain (Pelion), the other in seven-gated Thebes.'

while infinitely superior to all other ballads, and that, in my specimens of English ballad-poetry, I have been unfair. Well, no doubt there are better things in English ballad-poetry than

Now Christ thee save, thou proud portér . . .

but the real strength of a chain, they say, is the strength of its weakest link; and what I was trying to show you was, that the English ballad-style is not an instrument of enough compass and force to correspond to the Greek hexameter; that, owing to an inherent weakness in it as an epic style, it easily runs into one of two faults,—either it is prosaic and humdrum, or, trying to avoid that fault, and to make itself lively (*se faire vif*), it becomes pert and jaunty. To show that, the passage about King Adland's porter serves very well. But these degradations are not proper to a true epic instrument, such as the Greek hexameter.

You may say, if you like, when you find Homer's verse, even in describing the plainest matter, neither humdrum nor jaunty, that this is because he is so incomparably better a poet than other balladists, because he is Homer. But take the whole range of Greek epic poetry,—take the later poets, the poets of the last ages of this poetry, many of them most indifferent,—Coluthus, Tryphiodorus, Quintus of Smyrna, Nonnus. Never will you find in this instrument of the hexameter, even in their hands,

the vices of the ballad-style in the weak moments of this last: everywhere the hexameter,—a noble, a truly epical instrument,—rather resists the weakness of its employer than lends itself to it. Quintus of Smyrna is a poet of merit, but certainly not a poet of a high order; with him, too, epic poetry, whether in the character of its prosody or in that of its diction, is no longer the epic poetry of earlier and better times, nor epic poetry as again restored by Nonnus: but even in Quintus of Smyrna, I say, the hexameter is still the hexameter; it is a style which the ballad-style, even in the hands of better poets, cannot rival. And in the hands of inferior poets, the ballad-style sinks to vices of which the hexameter, even in the hands of a Tryphiodorus, never can become guilty.

But a critic, whom it is impossible to read without pleasure, and the disguise of whose initials I am sure I may be allowed to penetrate,—Mr. Spedding,—says that he 'denies altogether that the metrical movement of the English hexameter has any resemblance to that of the Greek.' Of course, in that case, if the two metres in no respect correspond, praise accorded to the Greek hexameter as an epical instrument will not extend to the English. Mr. Spedding seeks to establish his proposition by pointing out that the system of accentuation differs in the English and in the Virgilian hexameter; that in the first, the accent and the long syllable (or what has

to do duty as such) coincide, in the second they do not. He says that we cannot be so sure of the accent with which Greek verse should be read as of that with which Latin should; but that the lines of Homer in which the accent and the long syllable coincide as in the English hexameter, are certainly very rare. He suggests a type of English hexameter in agreement with the Virgilian model, and formed on the supposition that 'quantity is as distinguishable in English as in Latin or Greek by any ear that will attend to it.' Of the truth of this supposition he entertains no doubt. The new hexameter will, Mr. Spedding thinks, at least have the merit of resembling, in its metrical movement, the classical hexameter, which merit the ordinary English hexameter has not. But even with this improved hexameter he is not satisfied; and he goes on, first to suggest other metres for rendering Homer, and finally to suggest that rendering Homer is impossible.

A scholar to whom all who admire Lucretius owe a large debt of gratitude,—Mr. Munro,—has replied to Mr. Spedding. Mr. Munro declares that 'the accent of the old Greeks and Romans resembled our accent only in name, in reality was essentially different;' that 'our English reading of Homer and Virgil has in itself no meaning;' and that 'accent has nothing to do with the Virgilian hexameter.' If this be so, of course the merit which Mr. Spedding attributes to his own hexameter, of really corresponding

with the Virgilian hexameter, has no existence. Again; in contradiction to Mr. Spedding's assertion that lines in which (in our reading of them) the accent and the long syllable coincide,* as in the ordinary English hexameter, are 'rare even in Homer,' Mr. Munro declares that such lines, 'instead of being rare, are among the very commonest types of Homeric rhythm.' Mr. Spedding asserts that 'quantity is as distinguishable in English as in Latin or Greek by any ear that will attend to it;' but Mr. Munro replies, that in English 'neither his ear nor his reason recognises any real distinction of quantity except that which is produced by accentuated and unaccentuated syllables.' He therefore arrives at the conclusion, that in constructing English hexameters, 'quantity must be utterly discarded; and longer or shorter unaccentuated syllables can have no meaning, except so far as they may be made to produce sweeter or harsher sounds in the hands of a master.'

It is not for me to interpose between two such combatants; and indeed my way lies, not up the high-road where they are contending, but along a by-path. With the absolute truth of their general propositions respecting accent and quantity, I have nothing to do; it is most interesting and instructive to me to hear such propositions discussed, when it is Mr. Munro or Mr. Spedding who discusses them; but

* Lines such as the first of the Odyssey:

Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλά . . .

I have strictly limited myself in these lectures to the humble function of giving practical advice to the translator of Homer. He, I still think, must not follow so confidently, as makers of English hexameters have hitherto followed, Mr. Munro's maxim,—*quantity may be utterly discarded.* He must not, like Mr. Longfellow, make *seventeen* a dactyl in spite of all the length of its last syllable, even though he can plead that in counting we lay the accent on the first syllable of this word. He may be far from attaining Mr. Spedding's nicety of ear ;—may be unable to feel that 'while *quantity* is a dactyl, *quiddity* is a tribrach,' and that '*rapidly* is a word to which we find no parallel in Latin ;'—but I think he must bring himself to distinguish, with Mr. Spedding, between '*th'o'er*wearied eyelid,' and '*the* wearied eyelid,' as being, the one a correct ending for an hexameter, the other an ending with a false quantity in it; instead of finding, with Mr. Munro, that this distinction 'conveys to his mind no intelligible idea.' He must temper his belief in Mr. Munro's dictum,—*quantity must be utterly discarded,*—by mixing with it a belief in this other dictum of the same author,—*two or more consonants take longer time in enunciating than one.**

* Substantially, however, in the question at issue between Mr. Munro and Mr. Spedding, I agree with Mr. Munro. By the italicised words in the following sentence, 'The rhythm of the Virgilian hexameter depends entirely on *cæsura*, *pause*, and a due arrangement of words,' he has touched, it seems to me, in the constitution of this

Criticism is so apt in general to be vague and impalpable, that when it gives us a solid and definite possession, such as is Mr. Spedding's parallel of the Virgilian and the English hexameter with their difference of accentuation distinctly marked, we cannot be too grateful to it. It is in the way in which Mr. Spedding proceeds to press his conclusions from the parallel which he has drawn out, that his criticism seems to me to come a little short. Here even he, I think, shows (if he will allow me to say so) a little of that want of pliancy and suppleness so common among critics, but so dangerous to their criticism; he is a little too absolute in imposing his metrical laws, he too much forgets the excellent maxim of Menander, so applicable to literary criticism:

Καλὸν οἱ νόμοι σφόδρ' εἰσίν· ὁ δ' ὁρῶν τοὺς νόμους
λίαν ἀκριβῶς, συκοφάντης φαίνεται·

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hexameter, the central point, which Mr. Spedding misses. The accent, or *heightened tone*, of Virgil in reading his own hexameters, was probably far from being the same thing as the accent or *stress* with which we read them. The general effect of each line, in Virgil's mouth, was probably therefore something widely different from what Mr. Spedding assumes it to have been: an ancient's accentual reading was something which allowed the metrical beat of the Latin line to be far more perceptible than our accentual reading allows it to be.

On the question as to the *real* rhythm of the ancient hexameter, Mr. Newman has in his *Reply* a page quite admirable for force and precision. Here he is in his element, and his ability and acuteness have their proper scope. But it is true that the *modern* reading of the ancient hexameter is what the modern hexameter has to imitate, and that the English reading of the Virgilian hexameter is as Mr. Spedding describes it. Why this reading has not been imitated by the English hexameter, I have tried to point out in the text.

'laws are admirable things; but he who keeps his eye too closely fixed upon them, runs the risk of becoming'—let us say, a purist. Mr. Spedding is probably mistaken in supposing that Virgil pronounced his hexameters as Mr. Spedding pronounces them. He is almost certainly mistaken in supposing that Homer pronounced his hexameters as Mr. Spedding pronounces Virgil's. But this, as I have said, is not a question for us to treat; all we are here concerned with is the imitation, by the English hexameter, of the ancient hexameter *in its effect upon us moderns.* Suppose we concede to Mr. Spedding that his parallel proves our accentuation of the English and of the Virgilian hexameter to be different: what are we to conclude from that; how will a criticism, —not a formal, but a substantial criticism,—deal with such a fact as that? Will it infer, as Mr. Spedding infers, that the English hexameter, therefore, must not pretend to reproduce better than other rhythms the movement of Homer's hexameter for us; that there can be no correspondence at all between the movement of these two hexameters; that, if we want to have such a correspondence, we must abandon the current English hexameter altogether, and adopt in its place a new hexameter of Mr. Spedding's Anglo-Latin type; substitute for lines like the

> Clearly the rest I behold of the dark-eyed sons of Achaia . . .

of Dr. Hawtrey, lines like the

Procession, complex melodies, pause, quantity, accent,
After Virgilian precedent and practice, in order . . .

of Mr. Spedding? To infer this, is to go, as I have complained of Mr. Newman for sometimes going, a great deal too fast. I think prudent criticism must certainly recognise, in the current English hexameter, a fact which cannot so lightly be set aside; it must acknowledge that by this hexameter the English ear, the genius of the English language, have, in their own way, adopted, have *translated* for themselves the Homeric hexameter; and that a rhythm which has thus grown up, which is thus, in a manner, the production of nature, has in its general type something necessary and inevitable, something which admits change only within narrow limits, which precludes change that is sweeping and essential. I think, therefore, the prudent critic will regard Mr. Spedding's proposed revolution as simply impracticable. He will feel that in English poetry the hexameter, if used at all, must be, in the main, the English hexameter now current. He will perceive that its having come into existence as the representative of the Homeric hexameter, proves it to have, for the English ear, a certain correspondence with the Homeric hexameter, although this correspondence may be, from the difference of the Greek and English languages, necessarily incomplete. This incompleteness he will endeavour*, as he may find or fancy him-

* Such a minor change I have attempted by occasionally shifting,

self able, gradually somewhat to lessen through minor changes, suggested by the ancient hexameter, but respecting the general constitution of the modern: the notion of making it disappear altogether by the critic's inventing in his closet a new constitution

in the first foot of the hexameter, the accent from the first syllable to the second. In the current English hexameter it is on the first. Mr. Spedding, who proposes radically to subvert the constitution of this hexameter, seems not to understand that any one can propose to modify it partially; he can comprehend revolution in this metre, but not reform. Accordingly he asks me how I can bring myself to say '*Bé*tween that and the ships,' or '*Thére* sate fifty men;' or how I can reconcile such forcing of the accent with my own rule, that 'hexameters must *read themselves*.' Presently he says that he cannot believe I do pronounce these words so, but that he thinks I leave out the accent in the first foot altogether, and thus get an hexameter with only five accents. He will pardon me: I pronounce, as I suppose he himself does, if he reads the words naturally, 'Be*twéen* that and the ships,' and 'There *sáte* fifty men.' Mr. Spedding is familiar enough with this accent on the second syllable in Virgil's hexameters; in 'Et *té* montosa,' or 'Ve*lóces* jaculo.' Such a change is an attempt to relieve the monotony of the current English hexameter by occasionally altering the position of one of its accents; it is not an attempt to make a wholly new English hexameter by habitually altering the position of four of them. Very likely it is an unsuccessful attempt; but at any rate it does not violate what I think is the fundamental rule for English hexameters,—that they be such as to *read themselves*, without necessitating, on the reader's part, any non-natural putting-on or taking-off of accent. Hexameters like these of Mr. Longfellow,

In that delightful land which is washed by the Delaware's waters . . .

and,

As if they fain would appease the Dryads, whose haunts they molested . . .

violate this rule; and they are very common. I think the blemish of Mr. Dart's recent meritorious version of the Iliad is that it contains too many of them.

of his own for the English hexameter, he will judge to be a chimerical dream.

When, therefore, Mr. Spedding objects to the English hexameter that it imperfectly represents the movement of the ancient hexameter, I answer: We must work with the tools we have. The received English type, in its general outlines, is, for England, the necessary given type of this metre; it is by rendering the metrical beat of its pattern, not by rendering the accentual beat of it, that the English language has adapted the Greek hexameter. To render the metrical beat of its pattern is something; by effecting so much as this the English hexameter puts itself in closer relations with its original, it comes nearer to its movement, than any other metre which does not even effect so much as this; but Mr. Spedding is dissatisfied with it for not effecting more still, for not rendering the accentual beat too. If he asks me *why* the English hexameter has not tried to render this too, *why* it has confined itself to rendering the metrical beat, *why*, in short, it is itself, and not Mr. Spedding's new hexameter,—that is a question which I, whose only business is to give practical advice to a translator, am not bound to answer; but I will not decline to answer it nevertheless. I will suggest to Mr. Spedding that, as I have already said, the modern hexameter is merely an attempt to imitate the effect of the ancient hexameter, as read by us moderns; that the great object

of its imitation has been the hexameter of Homer; that of this hexameter such lines as those which Mr. Spedding declares to be so rare, even in Homer, but which are in truth so common,—lines in which the quantity and the reader's accent coincide,—are, for the English reader, just from that simplicity (for him) of rhythm which they owe to this very coincidence, the master-type; that so much is this the case, that one may again and again notice an English reader of Homer, in reading lines where his Virgilian accent would not coincide with the quantity, abandoning this accent, and reading the lines (as we say) *by quantity*, reading them as if he were scanning them; while foreigners neglect our Virgilian accent even in reading Virgil, read even Virgil by quantity, making the accents coincide with the long syllables. And no doubt the hexameter of a kindred language, the German, based on this mode of reading the ancient hexameter, has had a powerful influence upon the type of its English fellow. But all this shows how extremely powerful accent is for us moderns, since we find not even Greek and Latin quantity perceptible enough without it. Yet in these languages, where we have been accustomed always to look for it, it is far more perceptible to us Englishmen than in our own language, where we have not been accustomed to look for it. And here is the true reason why Mr. Spedding's hexameter is not and cannot be the current English hexameter, even

though it is based on the accentuation which Englishmen give to all Virgil's lines, and to many of Homer's,—that the quantity which in Greek or Latin words we feel, or imagine we feel, even though it be unsupported by accent, we do not feel or imagine we feel in English words, when it is thus unsupported. For example, in repeating the Latin line,

Ipsa tibi blandos *fundent* cunabula flores . . .

an Englishman feels the length of the second syllable of *fundent*, although he lays the accent on the first; but in repeating Mr. Spedding's line,

Softly cometh slumber *closing* th'o'erwearied eyelid . . .

the English ear, full of the accent on the first syllable of *closing*, has really no sense at all of any length in its second. The metrical beat of the line is thus quite destroyed.

So when Mr. Spedding proposes a new Anglo-Virgilian hexameter he proposes an impossibility; when he 'denies altogether that the metrical movement of the English hexameter has *any* resemblance to that of the Greek,' he denies too much; when he declares that, 'were every other metre impossible, an attempt to translate Homer into English hexameters might be permitted, *but that such an attempt he himself would never read*,' he exhibits, it seems to me, a little of that obduracy and over-vehemence in liking and disliking,—a remnant, I suppose, of our insular ferocity,—to which English criticism is so

prone. He ought to be enchanted to meet with a good attempt in any metre, even though he would never have advised it, even though its success be contrary to all his expectations; for it is the critic's first duty, — prior even, to his duty of stigmatising what is bad — *to welcome everything that is good.* In welcoming this, he must at all times be ready, like the Christian convert, even to burn what he used to worship, and to worship what he used to burn. Nay, but he need not be thus inconsistent in welcoming it; he may retain all his principles: principles endure, circumstances change; absolute success is one thing, relative success another. Relative success may take place under the most diverse conditions; and it is in appreciating the good in even relative success, it is in taking into account the change of circumstances, that the critic's judgment is tested, that his versatility must display itself. He is to keep his idea of the best, of perfection, and at the same time to be willingly accessible to every second best which offers itself. So I enjoy the ease and beauty of Mr. Spedding's stanza,

> Therewith to all the gods in order due . . .

I welcome it, in the absence of equally good poetry in another metre*, although I still think the stanza

* As I welcome another more recent attempt in stanza,—Mr. Worsley's version of the Odyssey in Spenser's measure. Mr. Worsley does me the honour to notice some remarks of mine on this measure: I had said that its greater intricacy made it a worse measure than

unfit to render Homer thoroughly well, although I still think other metres fit to render him better. So I concede to Mr. Spedding that every form of translation, prose or verse, must more or less break up Homer in order to reproduce him; but then I urge that that form which needs to break him up least is to be preferred. So I concede to him that the test proposed by me for the translator,— a competent scholar's judgment whether the translation more or less reproduces for him the effect of the original,—is not perfectly satisfactory; but I adopt it as the best we can get, as the only test capable of being really applied; for Mr. Spedding's proposed substitute,— the translation's making the same effect, more or less, upon the unlearned which the original makes

even the ten-syllable couplet to employ for rendering Homer. He points out, in answer, that 'the more complicated the correspondences in a poetical measure, the less obtrusive and absolute are the rhymes.' This is true, and subtly remarked; but I never denied that the single shocks of rhyme in the couplet were more *strongly felt* than those in the stanza; I said that the more frequent recurrence of the same rhyme, in the stanza, necessarily made this measure more *intricate*. The stanza repacks Homer's matter yet more arbitrarily, and therefore changes his movement yet more radically, than the couplet. Accordingly, I imagine a nearer approach to a perfect translation of Homer is possible in the couplet, well managed, than in the stanza, however well managed. But meanwhile Mr. Worsley,— applying the Spenserian stanza, that beautiful romantic measure, to the most romantic poem of the ancient world; making this stanza yield him, too (what it never yielded to Byron), its treasures of fluidity and sweet ease; above all, bringing to his task a truly poetical sense and skill,—has produced a version of the Odyssey much the most pleasing of those hitherto produced, and which is delightful to read.

For the public this may well be enough, nay, more than enough; but for the critic even this is not yet quite enough.

upon the scholar,— is a test which can never really be applied at all. These two impressions,— that of the scholar, and that of the unlearned reader,— can, practically, never be accurately compared; they are, and must remain, like those lines we read of in Euclid, which, though produced ever so far, can never meet. So, again, I concede that a good verse-translation of Homer, or, indeed, of any poet, is very difficult, and that a good prose-translation is much easier; but then I urge that a verse-translation, while giving the pleasure which Pope's has given, might at the same time render Homer more faithfully than Pope's; and that this being possible, we ought not to cease wishing for a source of pleasure which no prose-translation can ever hope to rival.

Wishing for such a verse-translation of Homer, believing that rhythms have natural tendencies which, within certain limits, inevitably govern them; having little faith, therefore, that rhythms which have manifested tendencies utterly un-Homeric can so change themselves as to become well adapted for rendering Homer,— I have looked about for the rhythm which seems to depart least from the tendencies of Homer's rhythm. Such a rhythm I think may be found in the English hexameter, somewhat modified. I look with hope towards continued attempts at perfecting and employing this rhythm; but my belief in the immediate success of such attempts is far less confident than has been supposed. Between the recog-

nition of this rhythm as ideally the best, and the recommendation of it to the translator for instant practical use, there must come all that consideration of circumstances, all that pliancy in foregoing, under the pressure of certain difficulties, the absolute best, which I have said is so indispensable to the critic. The hexameter is, comparatively, still unfamiliar in England; many people have a great dislike to it. A certain degree of unfamiliarity, a certain degree of dislike, are obstacles with which it is not wise to contend. It is difficult to say at present whether the dislike to this rhythm is so strong and so wide-spread that it will prevent its ever becoming thoroughly familiar. I think not, but it is too soon to decide. I am inclined to think that the dislike of it is rather among the professional critics than among the general public; I think the reception which Mr. Longfellow's Evangeline has met with indicates this. I think that even now, if a version of the Iliad in English hexameters were made by a poet who, like Mr. Longfellow, has that indefinable quality which renders him popular,— something *attractive* in his talent, which communicates itself to his verses,— it would have a great success among the general public. Yet a version of Homer in hexameters of the Evangeline type would not satisfy the judicious, nor is the definite establishment of this type to be desired; and one would regret that Mr. Longfellow should, even to popularise the hexa-

meter, give the immense labour required for a translation of Homer, when one could not wish his work to stand. Rather it is to be wished, that by the efforts of poets like Mr. Longfellow in original poetry, and the efforts of less distinguished poets in the task of translation, the hexameter may gradually be made familiar to the ear of the English public; at the same time that there gradually arises, out of all these efforts, an improved type of this rhythm; a type which some man of genius may sign with the final stamp, and employ in rendering Homer; an hexameter which may be as superior to Voss's as Shakspeare's blank verse is superior to Schiller's. I am inclined to believe that all this travail will actually take place, because I believe that modern poetry is actually in want of such an instrument as the hexameter.

In the meantime, whether this rhythm be destined to success or not, let us steadily keep in mind what originally made us turn to it. We turned to it because we required certain Homeric characteristics in a translation of Homer, and because all other rhythms seemed to find, from different causes, great difficulties in satisfying this our requirement. If the hexameter is impossible, if one of these other rhythms must be used, led us keep this rhythm always in mind of our requirements and of its own faults, let us compel it to get rid of these latter as much as possible. It may be necessary to have

recourse to blank verse; but then blank verse must *de-Cowperise* itself, must get rid of the habits of stiff self-retardation which make it say '*Not fewer* shone,' for '*So many shone.*' Homer moves swiftly: blank verse *can* move swiftly if it likes, but it must remember that the movement of such lines as

A thousand fires were burning, and by each . . .

is just the slow movement which makes us despair of it. Homer moves with noble ease: blank verse must not be suffered to forget that the movement of

Came they not over from sweet Lacedæmon . . .

is ungainly. Homer's expression of his thought is simple as light: we know how blank verse affects such locutions as

While the steeds *mouth'd their corn aloof* . . .

and such modes of expressing one's thought are sophisticated and artificial.

One sees how needful it is to direct incessantly the English translator's attention to the essential characteristics of Homer's poetry, when so accomplished a person as Mr. Spedding, recognising these characteristics as indeed Homer's, admitting them to be essential, is led by the ingrained habits and tendencies of English blank verse thus repeatedly to lose sight of them in translating even a few lines. One sees this yet more clearly, when Mr. Spedding, taking me to task for saying that the blank verse used for rendering Homer 'must not be Mr. Tennyson's blank

verse,' declares that in most of Mr. Tennyson's blank verse all Homer's essential characteristics,—'rapidity of movement, *plainness of words and style, simplicity and directness of ideas*, and, above all, nobleness of manner, are as conspicuous as in Homer himself.' This shows, it seems to me, how hard it is for English readers of poetry, even the most accomplished, to feel deeply and permanently what Greek plainness of thought and Greek simplicity of expression really are: they admit the importance of these qualities in a general way, but they have no ever-present sense of them; and they easily attribute them to any poetry which has other excellent qualities, and which they very much admire. No doubt there are plainer things in Mr. Tennyson's poetry than the three lines I quoted; in choosing them, as in choosing a specimen of ballad-poetry, I wished to bring out clearly, by a strong instance, the qualities of thought and style to which I was calling attention; but, when Mr. Spedding talks of a plainness of thought *like Homer's*, of a plainness of speech *like Homer's*, and says that he finds these constantly in Mr. Tennyson's poetry, I answer that these I do not find there at all. Mr. Tennyson is a most distinguished and charming poet; but the very essential characteristic of his poetry is, it seems to me, an extreme subtlety and curious elaborateness of thought, an extreme subtlety and curious elaborateness of expression. In the best and most characteristic pro-

ductions of his genius, these characteristics are most prominent. They are marked characteristics, as we have seen, of the Elizabethan poets; they are marked, though not the essential, characteristics of Shakspeare himself. Under the influences of the nineteenth century, under wholly new conditions of thought and culture, they manifest themselves in Mr. Tennyson's poetry in a wholly new way. But they are still there. The essential bent of his poetry is towards such expressions as

> Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars . . .

or

> O'er the sun's bright eye
> Drew the vast eyelid of an inky cloud . . .

or

> When the cairn'd mountain was a shadow, sunn'd
> The world to peace again . . .

or

> The fresh young captains flash'd their glittering teeth,
> The huge bush-bearded barons heaved and blew . . .

or

> He bared the knotted column of his throat,
> The massive square of his heroic breast,
> And arms on which the standing muscle sloped
> As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
> Running too vehemently to break upon it . . .

And this way of speaking is the least *plain*, the most *ùnHomeric*, which can possibly be conceived. Homer presents his thought to you just as it wells from the source of his mind: Mr. Tennyson carefully distils his thought before he will part with it. Hence

comes, in the expression of the thought, a heightened and elaborate air. In Homer's poetry it is all natural thoughts in natural words; in Mr. Tennyson's poetry it is all distilled thoughts in distilled words. Exactly this heightening and elaboration may be observed in Mr. Spedding's

While the steeds *mouth'd their corn aloof* . . .

(an expression which might have been Mr. Tennyson's), on which I have already commented; and to one who is penetrated with a sense of the real simplicity of Homer, this subtle sophistication of the thought is, I think, very perceptible even in such lines as these,

And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy . . .

which I have seen quoted as perfectly Homeric. Perfect simplicity can be obtained only by a genius of which perfect simplicity is an essential characteristic.

So true is this, that when a genius essentially subtle, or a genius which, from whatever cause, is in its essence not truly and broadly simple, determines to be perfectly plain, determines not to admit a shade of subtlety or curiosity into its expression, it cannot even then attain real simplicity; it can only attain a semblance of simplicity.* French criticism, richer in its vocabulary than ours, has invented a useful word to distinguish this semblance (often very

* I speak of poetic genius as employing itself upon narrative or dramatic poetry,—poetry in which the poet has to go out of himself

beautiful and valuable) from the real quality. The real quality it calls *simplicité*, the semblance *simplesse*. The one is natural simplicity, the other is artificial simplicity. What is called simplicity in the productions of a genius essentially not simple, is in truth *simplesse*. The two are distinguishable from one another the moment they appear in company. For instance, let us take the opening of the narrative in Wordsworth's Michael:

> Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
> There dwelt a shepherd, Michael was his name;
> An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
> His bodily frame had been from youth to age
> Of an unusual strength; his mind was keen,
> Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs;
> And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
> And watchful more than ordinary men.

Now let us take the opening of the narrative in Mr. Tennyson's Dora:

> With Farmer Allan at the farm abode
> William and Dora. William was his son,
> And she his niece. He often look'd at them,
> And often thought, "I'll make them man and wife."

The simplicity of the first of these passages is *simplicité*; that of the second, *simplesse*. Let us take the end of the same two poems; first, of Michael: —

> The cottage which was named the Evening Star
> Is gone — the ploughshare has been through the ground
> On which it stood; great changes have been wrought

---

and to create. In lyrical poetry, in the direct expression of personal feeling, the most subtle genius may, under the momentary pressure of passion, express itself simply. Even here, however, the native tendency will generally be discernible.

In all the neighbourhood: yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door: and the remains
Of the unfinish'd sheepfold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

And now, of Dora:

So those four abode
Within one house together; and as years
Went forward, Mary took another mate;
But Dora lived unmarried till her death.

A heedless critic may call both of these passages simple if he will. Simple, in a certain sense, they both are; but between the simplicity of the two there is all the difference that there is between the simplicity of Homer and the simplicity of Moschus.

But,—whether the hexameter establish itself or not, whether a truly simple and rapid blank verse be obtained or not, as the vehicle for a standard English translation of Homer,—I feel sure that this vehicle will not be furnished by the ballad-form. On this question about the ballad-character of Homer's poetry, I see that Professor Blackie proposes a compromise: he suggests that those who say Homer's poetry is pure ballad-poetry, and those who deny that it is ballad-poetry at all, should split the difference between them; that it should be agreed that Homer's poems are ballads *a little*, but not so much as some have said. I am very sensible to the courtesy of the terms in which Mr. Blackie invites me to this compromise; but I cannot, I am sorry to say, accept it; I cannot allow that Homer's poetry is ballad-poetry at all. A want of capacity

for sustained nobleness seems to me inherent in the ballad-form, when employed for epic poetry. The more we examine this proposition, the more certain, I think, will it become to us. Let us but observe how a great poet, having to deliver a narrative very weighty and serious, instinctively shrinks from the ballad-form as from a form not commensurate with his subject-matter, a form too narrow and shallow for it, and seeks for a form which has more amplitude and impressiveness. Every one knows the Lucy Gray and the Ruth of Wordsworth. Both poems are excellent; but the subject-matter of the narrative of Ruth is much more weighty and impressive to the poet's own feeling than that of the narrative of Lucy Gray, for which latter, in its unpretending simplicity, the ballad-form is quite adequate. Wordsworth, at the time he composed Ruth, — his great time, his *annus mirabilis*, about 1800, — strove to be simple; it was his mission to be simple; he loved the ballad-form, he clung to it, because it was simple. Even in Ruth he tried, one may say, to use it; he would have used it if he could: but the gravity of his matter is too much for this somewhat slight form; he is obliged to give to his form more amplitude, more augustness, to shake out its folds.

> The wretched parents all that night
> Went shouting far and wide;
> But there was neither sound nor sight
> To serve them for a guide.

That is beautiful, no doubt, and the form is adequate to the subject-matter. But take this, on the other hand:

> I, too, have passed her on the hills,
> Setting her little water-mills
> By spouts and fountains wild;
> Such small machinery as she turn'd,
> Ere she had wept, ere she had mourn'd,
> A young and happy child.

Who does not perceive how the greater fulness and weight of his matter has here compelled the true and feeling poet to adopt a form of more *volume* than the simple ballad-form?

It is of narrative poetry that I am speaking; the question is about the use of the ballad-form for *this*. I say that for this poetry (when in the grand style, as Homer's is) the ballad-form is entirely inadequate; and that Homer's translator must not adopt it, because it even leads him, by its own weakness, away from the grand style rather than towards it. We must remember that the matter of narrative poetry stands in a different relation to the vehicle which conveys it,—is not so independent of this vehicle, so absorbing and powerful in itself,—as the matter of purely emotional poetry. When there comes in poetry what I may call the *lyrical cry*, this transfigures everything, makes everything grand; the simplest form may be here even an advantage, because the flame of the emotion glows through and through it more easily. To go again for an illustration to

Wordsworth;— our great poet, since Milton, by his performance, as Keats, I think, is our great poet by his gift and promise;— in one of his stanzas to the Cuckoo, we have:

> And I can listen to thee yet;
> Can lie upon the plain
> And listen, till I do beget
> That golden time again.

Here the lyrical cry, though taking the simple ballad-form, is as grand as the lyrical cry coming in poetry of an ampler form, as grand as the

> An innocent life, yet far astray! . . .

of Ruth; as the

> There is a comfort in the strength of love . . .

of Michael. In this way, by the occurrence of this lyrical cry, the ballad-poets themselves rise sometimes, though not so often as one might perhaps have hoped, to the grand style.

> O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
> Wi' their fans into their hand,
> Or ere they see Sir Patrick Spence
> Come sailing to the land.
>
> O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
> Wi' their gold combs in their hair,
> Waiting for their ain dear lords,
> For they'll see them nae mair.

But from this impressiveness of the ballad-form, when its subject-matter fills it over and over again, —is indeed, in itself, all in all,— one must not infer its effectiveness when its subject-matter is not thus overpowering, in the great body of a narrative.

But, after all, Homer is not a better poet than the balladists, because he has taken in the hexameter a better instrument; he took this instrument because he was a *different* poet from them; so different,—not only so much better, but so essentially different,—that he is not to be classed with them at all. Poets receive their distinctive character, not from their subject, but from their application to that subject of the ideas (to quote the Excursion)

> On God, on Nature, and on human life . . .

which they have acquired for themselves. In the ballad-poets in general, as in men of a rude and early stage of the world, in whom their humanity is not yet variously and fully developed, the stock of these ideas is scanty, and the ideas themselves not very effective or profound. From them the narrative itself is the great matter, not the spirit and significance which underlies the narrative. Even in later times of richly developed life and thought, poets appear who have what may be called a *balladist's mind;* in whom a fresh and lively curiosity for the outward spectacle of the world is much more strong than their sense of the inward significance of that spectacle. When they apply ideas to their narrative of human events, you feel that they are, so to speak, travelling out of their own province: in the best of them you feel this perceptibly, but in those of a lower order you feel it very strongly. Even Sir Walter Scott's efforts of this kind,—even, for instance, the

> Breathes there the man with soul so dead . . .

or the

> Oh woman! in our hours of ease . . .

even these leave, I think, as high poetry, much to be desired; far more than the same poet's descriptions of a hunt or a battle. But Lord Macaulay's

> Then out spake brave Horatius,
> The captain of the gate:
> 'To all the men upon this earth
> Death cometh soon or late.' . . .

(and here, since I have been reproached with undervaluing Lord Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome, let me frankly say that, to my mind, a man's power to detect the ring of false metal in those Lays is a good measure of his fitness to give an opinion about poetical matters at all) — I say, Lord Macaulay's

> To all the men upon this earth
> Death cometh soon or late . . .

it is hard to read without a cry of pain. But with Homer it is very different. This 'noble barbarian,' this 'savage with the lively eye,'— whose verse, Mr. Newman thinks, would affect us, if we could hear the living Homer, 'like an elegant and simple melody from an African of the Gold Coast,'— is never more at home, never more nobly himself, than in applying profound ideas to his narrative. As a poet he belongs, —narrative as is his poetry, and early as is his date,— to an incomparably more developed spiritual and intellectual order than the balladists, or than Scott and Macaulay; he is here as much to be distinguished from them, and in the same way, as Milton is to be

distinguished from them. He is, indeed, rather to be classed with Milton than with the balladists and Scott; for what he has in common with Milton,—the noble and profound application of ideas to life,—is the most essential part of poetic greatness. The most essentially grand and characteristic things of Homer are such things as

> ἔτλην δ', οἷ' οὔπω τις ἐπιχθόνιος βροτὸς ἄλλος,
> ἀνδρὸς παιδοφόνοιο ποτὶ στόμα χεῖρ' ὀρέγεσθαι . . .*

or as

> καὶ σὲ, γέρον, τὸ πρὶν μὲν ἀκούομεν ὄλβιον εἶναι . . .†

or as

> ὣς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν,
> ζώειν ἀχνυμένους· αὐτοὶ δὲ τ' ἀκηδέες εἰσίν . . .‡

and of these the tone is given, far better than by anything of the balladists, by such things as the

> Io no piangeva: sì dentro impietrai:
> Piangevan elli . . .§

of Dante; or the

> Fall'n Cherub! to be weak is miserable . . .

of Milton.

* 'And I have endured,—the like whereof no soul upon the earth hath yet endured,—to carry to my lips the hand of him who slew my child.'—*Iliad*, xxiv. 505.

† 'Nay and thou too, old man, in times past wert, as we hear, happy.'—*Iliad*, xxiv. 543. In the original this line, for mingled pathos and dignity, is perhaps without a rival even in Homer.

‡ 'For so have the gods spun our destiny to us wretched mortals,—that we should live in sorrow; but they themselves are without trouble.'—*Iliad*, xxiv. 525.

§ '*I* wept not: so of stone grew I within:—*they* wept.'—*Hell*, xxxiii. 49 (Carlyle's Translation, slightly altered).

I suppose I must, before I conclude, say a word or two about my own hexameters; and yet really, on such a topic, I am almost ashamed to trouble you. From those perishable objects I feel, I can truly say, a most Oriental detachment. You yourselves are witnesses how little importance, when I offered them to you, I claimed for them,—how humble a function I designed them to fill. I offered them, not as specimens of a competing translation of Homer, but as illustrations of certain canons which I had been trying to establish for Homer's poetry. I said that these canons they might very well illustrate by failing as well as by succeeding: if they illustrate them in any manner, I am satisfied. I was thinking of the future translator of Homer, and trying to let him see as clearly as possible what I meant by the combination of characteristics which I assigned to Homer's poetry,—by saying that this poetry was at once rapid in movement, plain in words and style, simple and direct in its ideas, and noble in manner. I do not suppose that my own hexameters are rapid in movement, plain in words and style, simple and direct in their ideas, and noble in manner; but I am in hopes that a translator, reading them with a genuine interest in his subject, and without the slightest grain of personal feeling, may see more clearly, as he reads them, what I mean by saying that Homer's poetry is all these. I am in hopes that he may be able to seize more dis-

tinctly, when he has before him my

So shone forth, in front of Troy, by the bed of the Xanthus . . .

or my

Ah, unhappy pair, to Peleus why did we give you . . .

or my

So he spake, and drove with a cry his steeds into battle . . .

the exact points which I wish him to avoid in Cowper's

So numerous seem'd those fires the banks between . . .

or in Pope's

Unhappy coursers of immortal strain . . .

or in Mr. Newman's

He spake, and yelling, held a-front his single-hoofed horses.

At the same time there may be innumerable points in mine which he ought to avoid also. Of the merit of his own compositions no composer can be admitted the judge.

But thus humbly useful to the future translator I still hope my hexameters may prove; and he it is, above all, whom one has to regard. The general public carries away little from discussions of this kind, except some vague notion that one advocates English hexameters, or that one has attacked Mr. Newman. On the mind of an adversary one never makes the faintest impression. Mr. Newman reads all one can say about diction, and his last word on the subject is, that he 'regards it as a question about

to open hereafter, whether a translator of Homer ought not to adopt the old dissyllabic *landis*, *houndis*, *hartis*' (for lands, hounds, harts), and also 'the final *en* of the plural of verbs (we *dancen*, they *singen*, etc.),' which 'still subsists in Lancashire.' A certain critic reads all one can say about style, and at the end of it arrives at the inference that, 'after all, there is some style grander than the grand style itself, since Shakspeare has not the grand manner, and yet has the supremacy over Milton'; another critic reads all one can say about rhythm, and the result is, that he thinks Scott's rhythm, in the description of the death of Marmion, all the better for being *saccadé*, because the dying ejaculations of Marmion were likely to be 'jerky.' How vain to rise up early, and to take rest late, from any zeal for proving to Mr. Newman that he must not, in translating Homer, say *houndis* and *dancen*; or to the first of the two critics above-quoted, that one poet may be a greater poetical force than another, and yet have a more unequal style; or to the second, that the best art, having to represent the death of a hero, does not set about imitating his dying noises! Such critics, however, provide for an opponent's vivacity the charming excuse offered by Rivarol for his, when he was reproached with giving offence by it:—'Ah!' he exclaimed, 'no one considers how much pain every man of taste has had to *suffer*, before he ever inflicts any.'

It is for the future translator that one must work. The successful translator of Homer will have (or he cannot succeed) that true sense for his subject, and that disinterested love of it, which are, both of them, so rare in literature, and so precious; he will not be led off by any false scent; he will have an eye for the real matter, and, where he thinks he may find any indication of this, no hint will be too slight for him, no shade will be too fine, no imperfections will turn him aside,—he will go before his adviser's thought, and help it out with his own. This is the sort of student that a critic of Homer should always have in his thoughts; but students of this sort are indeed rare.

And how, then, can I help being reminded what a student of this sort we have just lost in Mr. Clough, whose name I have already mentioned in these lectures? He, too, was busy with Homer; but it is not on that account that I now speak of him. Nor do I speak of him in order to call attention to his qualities and powers in general, admirable as these were. I mention him because, in so eminent a degree, he possessed these two invaluable literary qualities,—a true sense for his object of study, and a single-hearted care for it. He had both; but he had the second even more eminently than the first. He greatly developed the first through means of the second. In the study of art, poetry, or philosophy, he had the most undivided and disinterested love for

his object in itself, the greatest aversion to mixing up with it anything accidental or personal. His interest was in literature itself; and it was this which gave so rare a stamp to his character, which kept him so free from all taint of littleness. In the saturnalia of ignoble personal passions, of which the struggle for literary success, in old and crowded communities, offers so sad a spectacle, he never mingled. He had not yet traduced his friends, nor flattered his enemies, nor disparaged what he admired, nor praised what he despised. Those who knew him well had the conviction that, even with time, these literary arts would never be his. His poem, of which I before spoke, has some admirable Homeric qualities; — out-of-doors freshness, life, naturalness, buoyant rapidity. Some of the expressions in that poem,—'*Dangerous Corrievreckan . . . Where roads are unknown to Loch Nevish*,'— come back now to my ear with the true Homeric ring. But that in him of which I think oftenest, is the Homeric simplicity of his literary life.

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